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ABSTRACT

The National Center for Children in Poverty has recently conducted research on case management in service integration projects, with the core information coming from 16 projects for children around the country. This brief describes the training and experience that case managers bring to their jobs and receive on the job, how prepared they feel to perform their jobs, and how case managers are supervised. Results indicated that case managers rely on prior experience and on-the-job training to strengthen their competence and confidence in working with clients and that formal education and orientation are less useful to case managers in preparing them for work. Projects hire staff members whose general qualifications meet the basic requirements for the job, but the fit between the backgrounds of new employees and necessary job skills is rarely sufficient to eliminate the need for orientation and staff development. Unfortunately, staff development is frequently an ad hoc and informal process. Supervision also tends to be informal, at least in terms of clinical content. The environments in which most case managers work call for wide-ranging skills and knowledge, but most training and degree programs emphasize specialization. (Contains two figures and three tables.) (SLD)

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ED 389 824

NATIONAL CENTER FOR CHILDREN IN POVERTY
Columbia University School of Public Health

RESOURCE BRIEF July 1995

Preparation, Staff Development, and Supervision of Case Managers

Carolyn Marzke

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The NATIONAL CENTER FOR CHILDREN IN POVERTY (NCCP) was established in 1989 at the School of Public Health, Columbia University. Its mission is to strengthen programs and policies that enhance the health and development of children under six years old living in poverty.

The Center works within an interdisciplinary framework in the domains of child and family health, early childhood care and education, and family and community support. Center staff and associates use techniques such as demographic and policy analysis, field-based and evaluation research to generate policy-relevant knowledge about poor children and families. The Center then applies that knowledge to public and private programs and initiatives, and disseminates the results to policymakers and program designers and directors, especially at the state and local level. Given the magnitude and complexity of the issues associated with child poverty, the Center works to reinforce and complement the efforts of other institutions and concerned individuals seeking changes in the systems designed to address the needs of poor families and young children.

NCCP's publications program is funded largely through core grants from the Ford Foundation and the Carnegie Corporation of New York.

Carolyn Marzke is a research analyst with Mathtech, Inc., in Falls Church, Virginia. She is also a core staff member of the National Center for Service Integration, a consortium of organizations that includes Mathtech, the Child and Family Policy Center, the Yale Bush Center on Child Development and Social Policy, Policy Studies Associates, and the National Governors' Association.

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Any Baby Can	San Antonio, Texas
Asian Perinatal Advocates	San Francisco, California
BayBright	West Springfield, Massachusetts
Blackfeet Tribe Head Start	Browning, Montana
Children's Case Management Organization	West Palm Beach, Florida
Dane County Parent Council	Madison, Wisconsin
Denver Family Opportunity	Denver, Colorado
Division of AIDS Services	New York, New York
Family Mosaic	San Francisco, California
Family Ties	Brooklyn, New York
Infant and Toddlers Program	Glen Burnie, Maryland
Kids in New Directions	Lapeer, Michigan
New Futures	Huntsville, Alabama
New Vistas	Santa Fe, New Mexico
Next Step	Elmira, New York
Youth Futures	Savannah, Georgia

Introduction

The concept of case management in human services systems is inherently appealing. People who need assistance may not know where to go or may not be able to obtain what they need. They get help from case managers, who assess their strengths and needs, and then identify and facilitate access to services. An underlying premise is that help is available for many unmet human needs, but the complexities and inadequacies of the human service system prevent many people from receiving services.

In recent years, case management has spread to virtually every field of human services. Current service integration projects—which attempt to coordinate services that are often fragmented and have complex entry points—often include case management as a key component. This widespread adoption has occurred despite little information about the effectiveness of case management. The vast array of case management approaches in service integration projects means that some classification scheme for sorting case management practices must be devised before the issue of effectiveness can be addressed.

The National Center for Children in Poverty (NCCP) has recently conducted research on case management in service integration projects. The study is intended to provide descriptive information that could be used for both understanding further the role and function of case management and developing a typology to pursue the question of effectiveness.

The core of this current study's information comes from 16 projects around the country that fulfill several criteria:[1]

- The projects represent many service domains, ranging from family preservation to at-risk infants and toddlers, thus allowing an exploration of case management practices in different settings.
- To obtain services for clients, case managers in these projects cross organizational boundaries rather than work within a single agency.
- The projects purport to serve the entire family unit, however defined, rather than a single individual.
- Preliminary information suggested that these projects have promising practices that could prove useful for policymakers, planners of service integration initiatives, and project administrators.

In addition to these criteria, the investigators paid particular attention to projects that serve children under six living in poverty—because of NCCP's mission and focus on this group. Of the 16 projects, all serve children and their families. Six specifically include very young children living in poverty in their target groups; another six provide services to very young children without regard to their families' income, although most of their clients live in poverty. To ensure confidentiality and anonymity, no information identifying specific projects is provided in this resource brief.

The findings of the research project appear in four resource briefs that provide descriptions of current case management practices. This resource brief, *Preparation, Staff Development, and Supervision of Case Managers*, describes the training and experience that case managers bring to their jobs; the methods and content of initial training and orientation that newly hired case managers receive; how prepared case managers feel to perform their jobs and why; ongoing staff development for case managers; and how case managers are supervised. The others are *Who Are Case Managers and What Do They Do? Case Management in Service Integration*, which discusses the characteristics of case managers, including demographic attributes, tenure, work environment, size of caseloads, time allocations among tasks, and salaries; *Working with Clients: Case Management in Service Integration*, which describes the work that case managers do with clients, providing information on the way case managers and clients become connected, the functions of case managers, and types of clients; and *Managing Case Managers: Case Management in Service Integration*, which reviews the issues involved when multiple case managers serve a single family.[2]

In recent years, case management has spread to virtually every field of human services.

What Case Managers Should Be Prepared to Handle

Although the job of case manager can bring tremendous rewards, the work is also challenging and sometimes frustrating. This is particularly true for family-centered services. By definition, case managers in family-centered projects must negotiate a fragmented services system on behalf of clients with multiple needs. This requires staff members who are skilled in working with families and who also have extensive, up-to-date knowledge about available services. To ensure that case managers have appropriate abilities, planners and officials of case management projects must think carefully about qualifications when hiring case managers. In addition, they must provide adequate orientation, staff development, supervision, and other support once the case managers are hired.

Most case management literature asserts the importance of training and supervision, but rarely makes specific recommendations concerning appropriate content, duration, or setting. Because the goals of case management projects and the target groups they serve vary so much, defining a comprehensive set of standards for training and supervision is a serious challenge. To date, service integration projects have no formal professional standards for case management. Where case management standards do exist, they are restricted to a particular profession, such as those issued by the National Association of Social Workers that focus on social workers as case managers.

photo by Nina Chaudry

Case manager at the Browning, Montana, study site

The responsibilities and activities reported by case managers across the 16 projects studied provide the context for a discussion of staff preparation, training, and supervision. As described in a separate resource brief,[3] in a typical project a case manager has 37 clients on his or her caseload, of whom 14 are considered intensive-need clients. Case managers perform a number of different functions, among them providing direct services such as counseling (which takes, on average, 13 percent of their time); record-keeping (13 percent); conducting needs assessments (11 percent); and coordinating services (20 percent). On average, 40 percent of case managers have been employed by a project since its first year.

Preparation for the Job

The extent to which case managers feel confident to do good work from their first day on the job depends on many factors, including their education, professional background, and life experience. This section discusses the educational and professional backgrounds that case managers have brought to the 16 projects, then reviews information about the applicant pool and staff mix.

Education

Most case management projects prefer that job candidates have a college degree, and several look for applicants who have degrees in a related field of study, such as behavioral science, education, or health. Relevant work experience carries more weight, however, and can compensate when candidates lack subject-specific education.

In a typical project, 50 percent of case managers hold bachelor's degrees, 27 percent have a postgraduate degree (usually a master's degree), and 23 percent have a high school degree or less than a college degree. (See Figure 1 on page five.)

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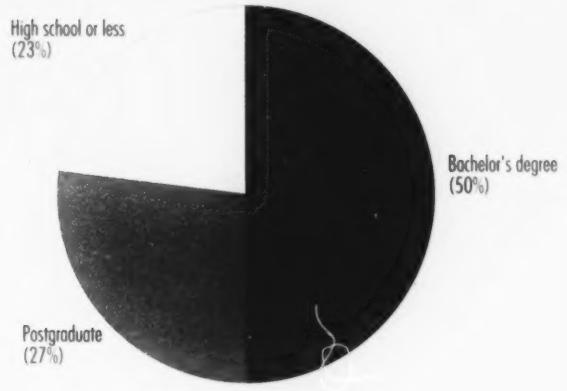
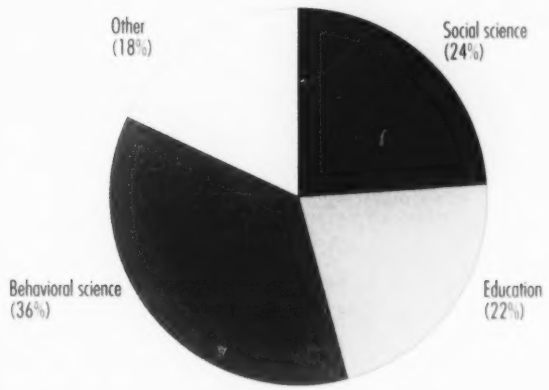
Figure 1. Education level of case managers in 16 study sites



The case managers studied have degrees in many fields. Most case managers have majors in the behavioral sciences, social sciences, or education. (See Figure 2.) In a typical project, 36 percent of case managers have a degree in the behavioral sciences (such as social work or psychology); 24 percent have a degree in a social science (such as sociology or political science); and 22 percent have an education degree.[4] Projects also employ case managers with degrees in art history, French, computer science, and business.

Figure 2. Fields represented by case manager degrees in 16 study sites



Although case managers do not share the same educational experiences, there are some patterns. Six projects have at least one social worker (BSW or MSW) on the staff, and six employ case managers with degrees in education. Five projects have a nurse on the staff. In addition, every project employs at least one case manager with a background in the social sciences, with sociology the most common field of study.

Most projects have staffs with educational backgrounds relevant to the work of case managers, but a few do not. In one project for recovering substance abusers, none of the case managers has a degree in a related field. This project values personal experience above academic preparation. Half of these case managers are themselves recovered substance abusers, and the other half have had extensive experience working with similar clients.

Professional Background

Case managers bring a wide variety of professional experience to their work. A number of projects hire staff from within the sponsoring agency. Several projects have hired former child protective services workers or former educators as case managers. A few employ former intake and eligibility workers from income support programs. Several case managers reported previous work as case managers for particular population groups such as the elderly, people with AIDS, youths in the juvenile justice system, or pregnant teenagers. Project staff members also include a former clergyman, a small business owner, and a systems engineer.

Professional and Educational "Fit" Between Case Managers and Their Work

To determine how prepared case managers are for their work, the "fit" was calculated between their professional and educational backgrounds and their current duties. For example, in a project serving low-income residents of a particular community, a case manager who had worked with welfare recipients, foster children, or teenage mothers was classified as a good fit, whereas one who had worked as a data entry clerk was classified as not a good fit. In assessing the fit between educational background and work, a case manager with a degree in social work was classified as a good fit, while a case manager with a degree in music was classified as not a good fit.

Case managers with less directly relevant education or experience were classified as a good fit if their previous duties included some transferable skills or

knowledge. As an example, a case manager who was previously an intake and referral worker in a human services agency was classified as a good fit, because this position would have brought the individual into contact with a variety of clients and programs. A case manager whose former job was solely to determine eligibility for child care payments was labeled a poor fit because case managers require a different set of skills and knowledge.

The fit between case managers' prior work experience and their current job is stronger than the match between their education and job duties. (See Table 1.) In a typical project, 55 percent of the case managers' educational backgrounds related to their current duties, and 69 percent of the case managers had previous work experience that meshed with their current work. Not surprisingly, the range of fit across projects was broad:

- All case managers in one school-linked project had no prior work experience because they all came to the job directly out of college.
- Most case managers in a project for medically fragile children had extensive prior experience as social workers, nurses, or workers in child protective services systems.
- Two-thirds of the case managers for a project that involves juvenile offenders held previous jobs in juvenile justice or youth development programs.
- Almost all case managers at a project for at-risk infants and children held graduate degrees in special education, speech pathology, or some other related field.

In a typical project, 55 percent of the case managers' educational backgrounds related to their current duties, and 69 percent of the case managers had previous work experience that meshed with their current work.

Table 1. Range of educational and work experience "fit" among case managers

Project	Percentage with a good educational "fit"	Percentage with a good work experience "fit"
A	75	75
B	33	78
C	29	67
D	50	50
E	100	70
F	80	75
G	25	0
H	33	67
I	38	43
J	0	100
K	80	100
L	57	63
M	50	100
N	67	50
O	67	67
P	100	100
Average	55	69

Life Experience

Ten of the 16 projects include at least one case manager who has had little or no relevant professional or educational background, but has relevant life experience. Some projects make a concerted effort to hire case managers with backgrounds similar to the client population. These workers' personal histories, language ability, and cultural knowledge are considered important contributions to the project's work:

- One project hires speakers of different Asian languages in order to match the languages its clients speak.
- In a project for recovering substance abusers, a case manager who is himself a former substance abuser said, when asked about his educational and professional qualifications for the job, "I know what they are going through. I know the feeling they have."
- In a project serving low-income, multi-need families, several case managers have no formal work experience or education. When one was asked about her background, she said, "I have 22 years of experience. I have a 22-year-old son."

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Applicant Pool

Case management projects face the same hiring constraints as other organizations. Their location (rural or urban) determines the size of the qualified applicant pool. The salaries they offer (typically $22,000 to $28,000),[5] when compared to similar organizations, affect their ability to hire qualified staff. Many case management projects compete with public social service, health care, and educational agencies, as well as private health and mental health organizations, which offer higher wages and more job security. There seems to be some relationship between salary and qualifications. Of the five highest-paying projects, the case managers in three have the most advanced, directly related educational backgrounds and work experience of all case managers in this study.

Several projects must hire from within their parent agencies according to civil service procedures. This process predetermines the pool of applicants, which could include some individuals who view a case management position as little different from other agency jobs. In one of these projects, most case managers are former intake workers from other departments that were eliminated or downsized. A supervisor for this project illustrated the hiring process this way: "When the [agency] budget gets cut, we look around and see which programs got cut, and we know who's coming in as the next group of case managers." These staff members, who had previously determined applicants' eligibility to receive public assistance, required significant training and supervision to develop skills in needs assessment, service brokering, and ongoing client support.

photo by Ken O'Reilly

Case manager visiting a client and her new baby in Elmira, New York

Case managers represent a variety of educational, work, and life experiences.

Projects that draw staff from the surrounding community may do so for several reasons. Some provide jobs and job training by hiring current or past clients as case managers. Projects also may try to hire people with backgrounds and life experiences similar to those of clients. In a project that hires community residents as case managers, one staff member said, "I can tell my clients, 'I know what you're going through. I've been there.' "

Staff Mix

Case managers represent a variety of educational, work, and life experiences. A typical staff includes a majority of case managers whose education is directly relevant to the work, a larger proportion who have relevant work experience, and perhaps one or two who have personal experience with some of the issues facing clients. For the most part, these staffing combinations happen accidentally, or at best serendipitously. Few projects have the luxury of structuring a balanced, ideally matched staff. Most project directors feel lucky if they find and keep staff with a critical type of expertise.

In some places, the mix of staff reflects a conscious effort to obtain specific skills and expertise tailored to the client population. A project that provides support to families with medically fragile children tries to hire staff proficient in handling each major situation that the families usually encounter. The project tries to have on staff at least one case manager with a nursing background, at least one with a background in child welfare and experience with the state's child protective services system, and several who are Hispanic or fluent in Spanish and experienced with this culture since many of the project's clients are Hispanic.

Training for New Case Managers

Orientation

All projects provide some initial orientation for new case managers, although only a few offer formal pre-service training. Most orientation consists of one-on-one sessions between the new worker and a supervisor. If the project hires a cohort of case managers (usually only at start-up or during a major expansion), the supervisors hold group orientation sessions. The orientation period ranges from one day to several weeks. Typically, projects reserve the first week on the job for orientation, after which case managers assume full responsibilities.

Orientation usually covers basic project information, including an overview of philosophy, goals, and policies. A supervisor also reviews the administrative tasks that accompany case management—how to complete required forms, maintain case files, and submit required reports. In many projects, orientation also covers procedures for intake and assessment.

Shadowing

Several projects require their new case managers to "shadow" senior-level case managers or supervisors. In this form of hands-on training the new case manager observes the senior staff member's interactions with clients in the office and during home visits. Shadowing may also include visits to other agencies frequently contacted on behalf of clients. Occasionally, newly hired case managers perform some activities for selected clients—such as conducting the needs assessment, calling other agencies, or completing paperwork—working under the supervision of a senior case manager who provides feedback and suggestions.

Projects that include shadowing for new employees typically allow them to work with an experienced staff person for about a week. In a project for pregnant and parenting teenagers, for example, newly hired case managers spend a week with their supervisor learning about documentation, visiting major social services agencies, and observing home visits. In a family preservation project for juvenile offenders, shadowing is a structured process. Experienced case managers teach and demonstrate key skills to new staff, such as methods for working with clients, conducting needs assessments, and developing service plans.

Clinical Skills

Only a few projects include clinical skills (such as family assessment, individual and family therapy, and crisis intervention) in the initial training that case managers receive. The ones that do are a family preservation project, which has well-defined strategies for working with clients, and two that hire relatively inexperienced applicants. Officials of other projects apparently feel their new workers are adequately prepared, or the projects do not have resources to offer clinical skills training. In one project, most case managers have degrees or experience that has incorporated clinical training, so their initial training focuses on project-specific issues.

The projects that hire from civil service lists view clinical skills development as especially important. In one, many case managers had come from other jobs within the department. Because this project follows an approach significantly different from other agency programs, the introduction of new skills has become a critical part of orientation. In the words of one supervisor, "Taking intake workers and turning them into good case managers means training is important. They need good grounding in interview skills, techniques for working with multiple-problem families, and in what it means to empower clients."

How Prepared Do Case Managers Feel for their Work?

In all projects, case managers report that the best preparation for work has been prior experience, rather than education or orientation. To the extent that the client population, services environment, and work setting vary from previous experiences, case managers must rely on on-the-job training to fill in the gaps. Case managers in projects that include shadowing in the initial training view this approach to be a particularly useful form of guided, on-the-job training.

Several projects require new case managers to "shadow" senior-level case managers or supervisors.

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Staff Development

Staff development generally encompasses several opportunities for job-related education and renewal. Employers provide these opportunities to ensure that staff stay abreast of changes in their fields and to provide case managers with the opportunity to reflect on and seek support for what can be stressful, frustrating work.

Frequency, Duration, and Location of Staff Development Activities

All projects offer activities officially designated as staff development, although few projects have formal goals or schedules. A typical project has staff development activities at least three times a year, with each session averaging one day. Activities consist of in-service sessions for the entire staff and opportunities for individual case managers to attend workshops and conferences offered by other agencies or organizations. No project routinely provides financial support for formal continuing education or attendance at national conferences.

photo by Nina Chaudry

Case manager in Madison, Wisconsin

All projects offer activities officially designated as staff development, although few projects have formal goals or schedules.

Topics of Staff Development Activities

In-service workshops usually focus on specific issues that affect clients, such as AIDS, domestic violence, or substance abuse. Case managers learn to identify symptoms of these problems, to work with clients on them, and to obtain support services or treatment. Presentations are most often lectures or question-and-answer sessions. Few projects routinely include clinical skills development as part of ongoing staff development. Those that do are projects that offer family preservation services or rely on staff with little or no background in clinical services.

Two projects have more extensive staff development arrangements. In a project that serves families with seriously emotionally disturbed children, each case manager develops a training agenda in consultation with the supervisor. These become "learning goals." In-service training addresses the more common goals; to have costs covered, any individualized training such as attending conferences and workshops must relate to a learning goal. A second project sets up, in advance, schedules for monthly in-service sessions. The past year included two sessions on clinical skills and ten on types of children's illnesses.

Who Conducts Staff Development Sessions?

The content of staff development activities depends to some extent on available presenters, both within and outside the agency. Few projects have rich staff development budgets (if at all), and they must find speakers and workshop leaders willing to offer their services at low or no cost. Most projects rely on internal capacity, such as case managers and supervisors who draw on their expertise to present workshops for the benefit of colleagues. Projects also rely heavily on staff members' professional and personal networks to obtain guest lecturers.

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Supervising Case Managers

Supervisors have many responsibilities in their work with case managers. For quality assurance, supervisors monitor case files, caseloads, and case manager activities. This helps ensure that case managers follow project policies and procedures, complete paperwork accurately and on time, and otherwise meet the basic requirements of the job. In human services projects, supervisors also provide clinical supervision and consultation. Also, they generally offer support, information, and encouragement to staff, and they facilitate staff interaction and teamwork.

Who Are Supervisors?

In nine of the 16 projects, staff with master's degrees in a related field (social work, education, or nursing) supervise the case managers. Several sites require supervisors to hold a master's degree or to have extensive experience as a case manager or supervisor:

- The project with the most stringent supervisory requirements looks for candidates with a master's degree in a related field and at least seven years' work experience, with two of the seven years as a supervisor.
- A project at the other extreme, which is on a shoestring budget, added a supervisor only recently. The position was filled by an individual with a limited case management background and no supervisory experience. She is well-connected in the community, however, and can link case managers with other providers through her personal network.
- One project that requires supervisors to have a master's degree in social work made two exceptions: one supervisor has a bachelor's in social work and another has a master's in public health. The organization granted the exceptions because each person had had several years' experience in a similar position within the organization.

Number of Supervisors

Most supervisors in this study spend only part of their time supervising case managers, so the full-time equivalent (FTE)[6] for each project was calculated. (See Table 2.) On average, a project has one supervisor for every ten case managers. In nine projects, each supervisor is responsible for ten or fewer case managers.

Table 2. Ratio of supervisory time to case managers in 16 study sites

Project	Number of supervisors	FTE of supervisory time*	FTE of case managers	Ratio of supervisory time to case managers
A	1	.20	4.0	1:20
B	2	.40	8.7	1:22
C	3	1.90	18.0	1:9
D	1	.20	2.0	1:10
E	1	.70	10.0	1:14
F	1	.65	4.0	1:6
G	1	.15	3.0	1:20
H	1	.30	2.7	1:9
I	3	1.10	9.0	1:8
J	1	.20	4.0	1:20
K	2	.85	5.0	1:6
L	3	1.26	6.1	1:5
M	1	NA**	—	NA
N	1	.35	1.4	1:4
O	1	1.00	10.0	1:10
P	1	.10	3.9	1:39
Average	1.5	0.62	6.1	1:10

** Table 3 on page 12 summarizes supervisors' other responsibilities in addition to direct supervision.*

*** At the time of the site visit, the supervisor's position was vacant, and investigators were unable to determine the percentage of time a given individual would spend on supervisory responsibilities.*

Projects with higher ratios of supervisors to case managers do not actually have more supervisors; they simply have fewer case managers. All projects have at least one supervisor, but across projects the number of supervisors does not necessarily increase as the number of case managers grows. While all case managers have at least nominal supervision, the depth of supervision may be limited. In each of five projects studied, the ratio of supervisory time to case managers is one to twenty or more:

- In two projects the supervisor doubles as the project director.
- In the other three, one is currently hiring another supervisor; a second employs case managers who are substantially prepared for their work; and a third established the supervisory position mainly to provide a career ladder for case managers.

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Content of Supervision

Supervisors perform several functions. They coordinate staff meetings, provide support and information, perform clinical supervision, and carry other project responsibilities.

Staff meetings. In all projects, supervisors conduct regular staff meetings. Case managers believe these meetings are important (although occasionally time-consuming) because they provide an opportunity to receive support and informal training from peers. Staff meetings customarily cover administrative matters and discussion of clients. Case managers brainstorm about difficult situations and exchange information about available services. This works particularly well when staff have varying types of expertise to share with one another. For these projects, staff meetings provide opportunities for informal team case management. One project requires each case manager to present a case that poses a dilemma, after which the project manager facilitates a discussion as case managers consider the problem, offer options, and develop a plan of action.

On average, staff meetings occur weekly. This pattern is consistent across projects with only two exceptions:

- In one small project, the supervisor and case managers share office space, and the project does not have regular staff meetings. The supervisor feels that weekly staff meetings are not necessary to maintain communication and support since they interact informally every day.
- Another project assembles case managers twice a week in teams of five. One meeting is for administrative issues and staff development. At the second, case managers share successes, struggles, and information about resources.

Support and information. In addition to convening staff and facilitating teamwork, project supervisors serve as regular sources of information and support for case managers. In a typical project, case managers talk daily with supervisors, discussing a particular client or reviewing a frustrating interaction. In a few projects, supervisors act as mentors and counselors for individual case managers. One case manager said, "My supervisor is like my therapist."

Supervisors have many responsibilities in their work with case managers. For quality assurance, supervisors monitor case files, caseloads, and case manager activities.

Contact with supervisors occurs informally when supervisors and case managers share office space or see each other at lunch or in the hallway. In addition, most projects have regularly scheduled meetings between supervisors and individual case managers that occur two to three times a month. In a typical project, supervisors routinely observe case manager-client interactions about every other month. In some cases a supervisor will accompany a case manager on a home visit or participate in client interviews.

Clinical supervision. Relatively little formal clinical supervision occurs during interactions among case managers and their supervisors. Only four projects have developed structured arrangements for clinical supervision:

- In one project, supervisors read case notes, make their own assessments, and meet with case managers to discuss their most difficult situations. Together they break down the case, enabling the supervisor to assess and help build up the case manager's skills.
- A second is a family preservation project. Supervisors review case notes and hold group and individual supervisory sessions weekly.
- One project has two case managers who work with homeless women and their children. A consultant acts as a case manager clinician and provides five hours of supervision a month.
- A project serving emotionally disturbed children employs one supervisor with a master's degree in social work and 20 years' experience as a therapist and social worker. She regularly conducts individual supervisory sessions and consultations as needed. Weekly, case managers meet together to go over charts as a form of peer review.

When case managers function more as monitors and service brokers than as counselors or therapists, the absence of clinical supervision may not pose a problem. In most projects, however, the tenor of the case manager-client relationship is probably affected by the lack of clinical supervision. As described elsewhere,[7] many case managers do develop intense personal relationships with clients. This may or may not be detrimental to project goals, but it suggests a need for oversight to ensure professional distance between the project and the client.

Other project responsibilities. One project employs a full-time supervisor whose sole responsibility is supervision. Other projects assign additional responsibilities to supervisors. A typical supervisor spends an average of 40 percent of her time as a supervisor, 25 percent as a case manager, 20 percent on administrative duties, and 15 percent on coordination with other service providers. (See Table 3.)

Table 3. Average time allocations of supervisors in 16 study sites (in percentages)

Project	Supervision	Case management	Administration	Coordination with other agencies
A	20	40	40	0
B	20	68	6	7
C	63	0	22	15
D	20	0	30	50
E	70	0	5	20
F	65	5	0	30
G	15	30	50	5
H	30	70	0	0
I	37	25	22	15
J	20	30	30	20
K	43	58	0	0
L	42	20	29	9
M*	NA	NA	NA	NA
N	35	15	20	30
O	100	0	0	0
P	10	15	50	25
Average percentage	**40**	**25**	**20**	**15**

** The supervisor's position was vacant at the time of the site visit.*

Supervisors in 11 of the study projects carry caseloads. Several of those interviewed echoed the words of one supervisor, who said, "It is very important to know the people you are serving. It's difficult to supervise case management. You have to know your staff's clients." One supervisor carries a caseload to maintain her skills and her familiarity with the realities that case managers face in the field. Another, who is also the project director, meets as many clients as possible so that she can take over if necessary. She routinely assumes responsibility for hostile or intractable clients. Some supervisors take on clients in especially difficult situations; others take clients if the assigned case manager becomes ill or resigns. Supervisors promoted from within the project may also bring caseloads with them.

Case management supervisors also have administrative responsibilities. A typical project uses 20 percent of supervisors' time for such tasks, which may include attending meetings, devising office procedures, and completing reports. On average, supervisors spend about 15 percent of their time handling coordination with other agencies. This entails establishing referral procedures, resolving conflicts, and negotiating relationships when more than one agency is providing services to the same family.[8] A supervisor stressed that coordination responsibilities place him in a better position to help case managers understand and work within the larger service system. He said, "It is necessary to understand the mind-set of agencies. It's not the same as talking to families."

Projects try to recruit applicants with relevant experience, although they often compete with other more stable and well-funded organizations for the most qualified staff.

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Conclusions

Case managers rely on prior experience and on-the-job training to strengthen their confidence and competence in working with clients. Formal education and orientation are less useful to case managers in preparing them for work. Projects try to recruit applicants with relevant experience, although they often compete with other more stable and well-funded organizations for the most qualified staff. Despite these constraints, projects hire staff members whose general qualifications match at least the basic requirements for the job. The fit between the backgrounds of new employees and necessary job skills, however, is rarely sufficient to eliminate the need for initial orientation, ongoing staff development, and supervision.

Many projects acknowledge the importance of staff development and supervision, but few have the resources to adequately fulfill these functions. Projects rarely have the money to tailor staff development to specific goals and needs—any more than they can tailor the staffing mix to the specific needs of the client group. Some projects cannot assign a high priority to staff development because of other demands on their time and dollars. The result is that staff development is frequently an ad hoc, informal process.

Supervision, likewise, tends to be informal, at least in terms of clinical content. Supervisors and case managers emphasize the value of peer interaction and opportunities to brainstorm and receive emotional support from one another. Staff meetings can be especially helpful given the small amount of supervisory time available to individual case managers.

The case managers in the 16 projects studied operate in very complex environments. Clients have multiple, diverse needs, with each individual requiring a slightly different mix of services. The service system is itself enormously complex, and case managers have to interact with many agencies to meet clients' needs. This type of environment calls for case managers with wide-ranging skills and knowledge, but most training and degree programs emphasize specialization. Although case managers bring valuable expertise with them when they are hired, workers in these projects would benefit from cross-disciplinary training. This type of training would facilitate their interactions with one another and with clients, and would enable them to communicate and collaborate more effectively with service providers.

References

1. A fuller discussion of research methods appears on page 14.
2. Information about ordering the resource briefs appears on the back cover.
3. See *Who Are Case Managers and What Do They Do? Case Management in Service Integration*.
4. For 27 percent of case managers interviewed, the degree field was not available. These data reflect the distribution for the remaining case managers.
5. *Who Are Case Managers and What Do They Do? Case Management in Service Integration* contains a more detailed discussion of case manager salaries.
6. A full-time staff person present five days per week, eight hours per day, represents 1.0 FTE. Part-time staff or part-time duties are counted as fractions of one full-time staff person. For example, a staff member who acts as a supervisor for eight hours over the course of one week provides one-fifth the coverage of a full-time supervisor, or 0.2 FTE.
7. See *Working With Clients: Case Management in Service Integration*.
8. A discussion of multiple case managers appears in *Managing Case Managers: Case Management in Service Integration*.

Research Methods

The National Center for Children in Poverty (NCCP) conducted this study of case management as part of its work in the domain of family and community support. The research is descriptive, not evaluative. Given the state of knowledge about case management—especially its recent expansion into a broad array of human services—the investigators concluded that basic information was lacking, such as who are case managers, what do they do, and how do they do it? The case management research project's findings on these questions can contribute to advancing research on the subject. Before studies can shed light on outcomes from case management initiatives, researchers must have a clearer understanding of case management practices and operations.

Criteria for Case Management

To conduct this research on case management in service integration, the research team began with a comprehensive literature review. From this, we developed a concept of case management that has four central components. The components serve as threshold criteria that must be met for an initiative to be considered as one involving case management. First, a case manager must perform the core functions of case management, namely assessment, plan development, identification and access of services, and monitoring. Second, some person or persons must routinely perform the functions of case management. Third, the case manager must work across organizational boundaries, not just within his or her parent agency. Fourth, case management services must be developed in consideration of the client's entire family. These components, along with a more detailed explanation of the research design and questions, are more fully described in a concept paper issued in 1994. (See back cover.)

Site Selection

The bulk of this research derives from original data collection through site visits to 16 projects around the United States. To choose projects for in-depth study, the research team searched some 600 project files that are part of the Information Clearinghouse of the National Center for Service Integration.* The files contain materials describing service integration initiatives that serve children, youth, and families. We then selected projects that appeared to meet the four components of our case management concept. NCCP's program focus is on children under six, so we paid careful attention to projects that serve this population. About 110 projects were identified, which we then sorted according to target population, geographic location, size, and funding source. We selected the 16 projects to reflect diversity rather than similarity.

Data Collection

Between one and three research team members spent up to four days at each case management project. Before each site visit, we reviewed all available written materials about the project. During the site visit, we interviewed case managers,** supervisors, a director, and other individuals, such as board members and budget personnel; we also collected additional documents, such as intake and assessment forms, evaluations, resource guides, annual reports, and budgets. Whenever possible, we accompanied case managers on home visits so we could meet with clients.

Most of the interviews were semi-structured to collect process information about the operations of case management. Several series of questions dealing with case manager characteristics, caseloads, and contact with other agencies were structured and closed-ended. Site visitors incorporated all data and information onto a site reporting form.***

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* This clearinghouse, formerly at the National Center for Children in Poverty, is now at the National Center for Service Integration, c/o Child and Family Policy Center, 218 Sixth Avenue., Suite 1021, Des Moines, IA 50309. Tel: (515) 280-9027. Fax: (515) 243-5941.

** One project does not employ most case managers over the summer, which was when the site visit occurred. For these case managers, we created a mail survey derived from questions asked during site visits.

*** Copies of the site reporting form are available in the NCCP library.

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In total, we interviewed 121 case managers, 36 supervisors and directors, 14 other staff, and 27 clients. Several project staff members fulfill dual functions, such as acting as both case manager and supervisor. We estimate that we have data on over 95 percent of all staff employed at the 16 projects.

Data Analysis and Terminology

A first round of analysis involved site investigators combining and synthesizing information to complete the questions in the site reporting form. Site visitors reviewed each other's answers to check inter-coder reliability. A subsequent analysis took place as we compared data from the reporting forms across sites. In conducting the analyses, we paid special attention to similarities and inconsistencies. Similarities suggest that a practice or phenomenon is common; inconsistencies imply differences in procedures, client population, or environmental conditions.

We coded quantitative data from case managers, analyzed the information, and presented the results as numerical findings. Responses from part-time project staff were weighted to ensure equivalency. Unless otherwise noted, all data reported in the resource brief refer to the projects studied. In other words, for a given variable and a given site, we aggregated data and produced an average according to the number of responses. We then treated each project equally to determine numerical findings. Because the data are not from representative or randomly selected sites, we present only frequencies or percentages.

The 16 sites refer to case managers by many different names, such as "family outreach workers," "home visitors," "family advocates," and "service coordinators." Also, several different names refer to the at-risk people with whom they work. For simplicity and uniformity, we have used the terms "case manager" and "client."

Other Case Management Publications Available from NCCP

The National Center for Children in Poverty (NCCP) has issued several publications that draw on this research project. In addition to this resource brief, three others are available (at $5.00 each or $15 for all four):

- *Who Are Case Managers and What Do They Do? Case Management in Service Integration* by Ellen L. Marks
- *Working With Clients: Case Management in Service Integration* by Ellen L. Marks
- *Managing Case Managers: Case Management in Service Integration* by Ellen L. Marks

Two additional publications offer more general information about case management:

- *Case Management in Service Integration: An Annotated Bibliography* by Ellen L. Marks, Karen E. Maurer, and Linda S. Simkin ($6.00)
- *Case Management in Service Integration: A Concept Paper* by Ellen L. Marks ($8.00)

Information about ordering these documents prepaid (postage/handling costs included), or about other NCCP publications, can be obtained by writing, telephoning, or faxing NCCP, or through e-mail: 154 Haven Avenue, New York, NY 10032; tel: (212) 927-8793; fax: (212) 927-9162; e-mail: ejs22@columbia.edu. Include name, organization, address, telephone, and fax in all requests, including e-mail. Also, NCCP's triannual newsletter, *News and Issues*, as well as other information about the Center, may be accessed on the Internet: http://cpmcnet.columbia.edu/dept/nccp/

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